

My name is Carrie Lindberg and I am the parent of Kelsi Lindberg now a freshman at Helena High and a JV Cheerleader. When Kelsi was in 7th grade she suffered severe bullying that lead to two youths receiving restraining orders for a year. Kelsi was forced to endure physical abuse with verbal assaults that included cyber-space smear campaigns through text messages and Facebook ads. These campaigns reached all the way to relatives and friends in different communities. Kelsi experienced tripping, punching and kicking in the school hallways and had her head slammed into lockers and girls pencil-shanking her arms on a daily basis. We had to change her cell number twice and we couldn't get away from the constant harassment and fear.

The youths that she grew up with since preschool and that she trusted turned on her and planned out a way to actually get her to a party to gang beat her. When I refused to let her go these youths verbally attacked me on my cell phone.

All of this took its toll on her mental health, Kelsi refused to go to school, her grades were dropping and she started to have panic attacks and needed to be heavily medicated in order to get through her day. Her therapist explained her fear of school and friends being similar as having the MOB after her. This is too much for any thirteen year old to go through and every child deserves to learn in an environment with a positive and healthy social climate and culture free from harassment, intimidation and bullying in order to boost their health as well as their educational achievements and be successful in school.

Jessica Peterson a Violence Prevention Consultant with Youth Connections Safe Schools and Healthy Students Initiative here in Helena sent me these statistics on our community:

- Between 2009 and 2010 we have seen a rise of 7.93 to 9.34 percentage of middle and high school student who are afraid to go to school because of a fear for their safety
- The number of physical fights has increased between 2009 and 2010 from 206 to 286
- 45% of middle school and 23% of high school students reported being bullied in the spring of 2010
- 50.6% of students in grades 8, 10 and 12 have attitudes favorable to antisocial behavior based on self-reporting
- 54.6% believe that their parents have attitudes favorable to antisocial behavior.
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This is unacceptable for Montana and we have an obligation to do better for our youth!

Prevention efforts need to be funded and this is why I support SENATE BILL NO. 151.

For Montana we need prevention programs that are designed to help communities reduce these statistics and help our youth by creating and sustaining a healthier social climate in schools and other youth-centered environments.

By building collective commitment among educators, parents, service providers and other key stakeholders to address the problem of bullying in partnership.

Implementing prevention and intervention strategies that have been shown to yield tangible, lasting benefits for individuals, families, schools and communities; involving young people as active allies and advocates in bullying prevention efforts in Montana and developing cultural competency strategies, skills and programs that are inclusive and enhance communication and healthy relationship building.